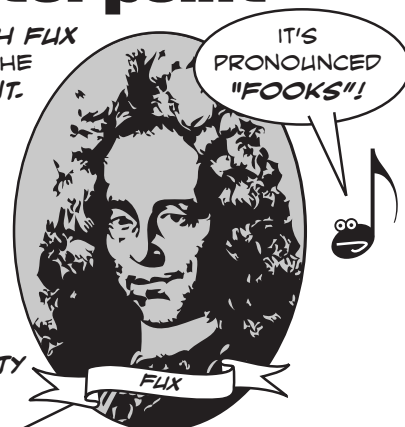


Introduction to Species Counterpoint

IN 1725, AN AUSTRIAN COMPOSER AND THEORIST NAMED **JOHANN JOSEPH FLUX** WROTE A THEORY TEXTBOOK CALLED **GRADUS AD PARNASSUM**, IN WHICH HE OUTLINED HIS METHOD OF TEACHING HOW TO WRITE **GOOD COUNTERPOINT**.

COUNTERPOINT IS THE COMBINATION OF **TWO OR MORE MELODIES**, EACH ONE AS **IMPORTANT AND INTERESTING** AS THE OTHER.

GRADUS AD PARNASSUM MEANS "**STEPS TO PARNASSUS**." PARNASSUS REFERRED TO THE **HIGHEST PEAK** IN **GREECE**, AND WAS USED AS A **METAPHOR FOR PERFECTION**.



GRADUS AD PARNASSUM WAS A **BIG HIT**, USED (OR AT LEAST PRAISED) BY COMPOSERS LIKE **MOZART, BEETHOVEN, AND HAYDN**. THE SYSTEM THAT **FLUX** USED IS REFERRED TO AS **SPECIES COUNTERPOINT**, BECAUSE IT INVOLVES GOING THROUGH **INCREASING LEVELS OF RHYTHMIC COMPLEXITY** WHICH ARE LABELED AS **SPECIES I, SPECIES II, AND SO FORTH**.



1525-1594



INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, THE **LANGUAGE** **FLUX** WAS ADVOCATING WAS NOT THE **COUNTERPOINT** OF THE **COMMON PRACTICE PERIOD** TO WHICH HE BELONGED, BUT THE MORE **STRICT** RULES OF **COUNTERPOINT** USED BY COMPOSERS OF THE **RENAISSANCE** MORE THAN A **CENTURY EARLIER**.

SPECIFICALLY, **FLUX** WAS A **STARRY-EYED ADMIRER** OF THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE COMPOSER **GIOVANNI PIERLUIGI DA PALESTRINA**, WHO HE CONSIDERED TO REPRESENT THE **PEAK OF COMPOSITIONAL ARTISTRY**... SOMETHING HE FELT WAS BEING **LOST** OR EVEN **SQUANDERED** BY HIS **BAROQUE** AND **CLASSICAL CONTEMPORARIES**.

OF COURSE, IT'S WORTH **POINTING OUT** THAT **FLUX** DIDN'T ACTUALLY **HAVE ACCESS** TO MUCH OF **MY MUSIC**!

RIGHT. SO THE **LANGUAGE** **FLUX** IS **TEACHING** IS REALLY AN **INTERESTING IDEAL**: BASED PARTLY ON HIS PERCEPTIONS OF **PALESTRINA'S MUSICAL LANGUAGE** AS DELIVERED TO HIM THROUGH **ITALIAN THEORISTS**, AND PARTLY ON HIS **OWN IDEAS** OF WHAT HE THOUGHT THE **LANGUAGE SHOULD BE**.

BUT LET'S CUT **FLUX** SOME **SLACK** HERE: AS **THEORISTS**, WE'RE **ALL GUILTY** OF THIS TO SOME DEGREE.

ANYWAY, **LET'S GET STARTED!** GOING THROUGH **FLUX'S STEPS** FOR LEARNING **COUNTERPOINT** GIVES US A **GLIMPSE** OF HOW THE **MASTERS** LEARNED THEIR CRAFT AND A **FEEL** FOR THE **ENVIRONMENT** IN WHICH THEY DEVELOPED THEIR **OWN MUSICAL LANGUAGES**.



HURRAY! LET'S **GO**, **GIOVANNI**, AND BRING THE **BEAUTIFUL LIGHT** OF **PERFECT COMPOSITION** TO THESE **EAGER STUDENTS!**

YEAH, **JOE**, **ABOUT** THAT... YOU **DO** REALIZE THAT YOUR IDEA OF **PERFECT COMPOSITION** IS JUST A

BLISSFULLY AWESOME THING?
YES, THAT'S JUST WHAT I WAS THINKING!

NO, I MEAN THAT IT'S **SUPER FUN? YAYYYY!!!!**